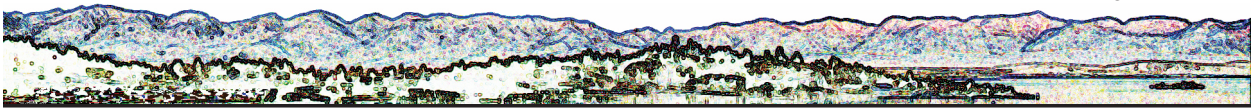
Swan View's News

Holidays 2021



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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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Reflecting on a Sobering 2021 and Looking Forward!

We hope this newsletter finds you and yours healthy and happy. It has been a challenging year given COVID is still with us in a big way. We hope you stay safe.

Unfortunately, like last year, we begin our Holiday newsletter by bidding farewell and paying tribute to a long-time wildlife advocate that recently passed away. We pay homage to Brian Peck on page 2.

On pages 3 and 4 we cut through the lies that are keeping us from achieving climate change goals, from conserving trees needed to store CO2, and from protecting lands and waters being overrun with human recreation. Simply put, logging is being touted as "restoration" and recreation is being touted as "conservation," when research and common sense show otherwise.

On page 5 we provide a short review of Susan Simard's book "In Search of the Mother Tree" and look forward to the day land management agencies begin to regard forests as the intricate web of life that they are. We also provide a short report on our October 10 membership meeting.

On page 6 we list some of the unsolicited praise we have received for our work and our weekly Swan Ranger reports.

On page 7 we ask that you help us raise the $20,000 still necessary to meet our budget this year. We needed to buy a new laptop as our 2012 version is beginning to fail and this puts us a little further behind the curve than at this time most years!

We are still waiting for Judge Molloy to clarify his June ruling in our lawsuit against the revised Flathead Forest Plan. While he found in our favor for grizzly bears and bull trout, we are asking that he take steps to insure the Flathead does not move forward with a number of timber sales and road building projects until it has corrected the problems with its Plan. The good news is that the Bug Creek timber sale on Crane Mountain remains "on hold" and we got the Schmidt Creek timber sale and its road building "cancelled!"

We say THANK YOU to all of you who helped us meet our Cinnabar matching grant, that send us photos of your outings to include in our Ranger Reports, or that otherwise support our work through your kind words and donations!

Happy Holidays!

Keith

Reading a hard copy newsletter and want to access it in color with linked citations? Visit http://www.swanview.org

Remembering and Appreciating Brian Peck!

Brian Peck, a good friend, colleague and wildlife advocate extraordinaire, passed away November 7 after a short battle with aggressive cancer. His spouse Linda Miller was by his side.

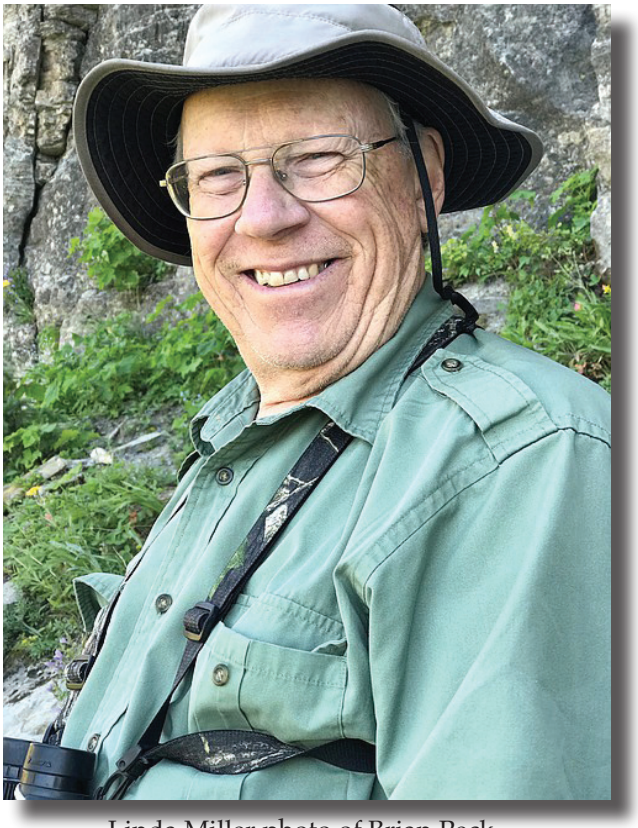
Brian was well known in NW Montana for his frequent letters to newspaper editors. He was well known to public land and wildlife managers for his steadfast attendance at public meetings, where he spoke eloquently for the wildlife that cannot speak for themselves.

Brian was introduced to wildlife education while in grade school and grew up exploring the great outdoors. He earned a degree in wildlife, fish and wildlands science and put his knowledge to good use as an educator, advocate and independent wildlife consultant.

After a couple years in the Army, Brian worked as a park ranger and later for organizations including the Road Scholar program, Great Bear Foundation, Audubon, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, and WildEarth Guardians. He also worked for Swan View Coalition on occasion, but he seldom accepted any pay and only begrudgingly accepted reimbursement of travel expenses!

Brian often attended public meetings on behalf of Swan View Coalition and tracked the causes of grizzly bear mortalities in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. He traveled far and wide, however, opposing mining, logging and other destruction of grizzly bear habitat in the Cabinet-Yaak, Selkirk, and Yellowstone Ecosystems also.

Brian was also passionate about protecting wolves and the wildlands they and grizzly bears depend upon. He was a master storyteller whose stories drew others to be advocates for wildlife and wildlands. Through it all, Brian was simply unflappable. He could match wits with the most frustrating of bureaucrats and never lose his trademark smile and jovial disposition.



Linda Miller photo of Brian Peck.

Brian helped Swan View Coalition weed through many thousands of pages of federal documents in order to successfully challenge ill-conceived plans like the revised Flathead Forest Plan. We will miss his help, but even more so, his friendship and devotion to wildlife and wildlands.

Brian once wrote for Grizzly Times about sharing his spotting scope view of a grizzly bear, concluding: "Twenty years later I remember that moment like it was yesterday, and somewhere in Michigan I suspect there's a family that still looks back on that day and smiles. Such is the power of the Great Bear to transform days and change lives if we are willing to summon the humility to look, listen and learn."

Hope Requires We Quit Lying to Ourselves and our Kids!

As our climate warms and our democracy crumbles, there is still hope for halting those trends. That hope, however, is wholly dependant on people demanding the truth regardless of how politically inconvenient it may be.

Virtual reality is not spawned only by computers, it is created every time someone tells a lie. Just because someone says something is so does not mean that it is - and it takes some critical thinking to tell fact from fiction.

Politicians and advertisers learned long ago that perception is more important than reality when it comes to selling the public a bill of goods. As governments and businesses perfected their deceit, the toll on our planet has been enormous.

Youth, dry lake bed and rainbow by Pat Jaquith.

Time is short and we must demand the truth and call out the lies. In terms of public land management, it has gotten so bad that Republicans and Democrats alike are getting away with renaming "logging" as "restoration" and renaming "recreation" as "conservation" - even though both have been shown to have often devastating effects on natural ecosystems and our enjoyment of them.

In this article, we will explore a few examples of how lies and smokescreens have brought us to the brink and set us on a course that will make things worse, while being told they will get better. In most cases, understanding how this happens is a matter of following the money and verifying the facts.

COP26, Biden, and Deforestation

At the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, President Biden vowed he would try to get Congress to deploy up to $9 billion to end worldwide deforestation by 2030. Meanwhile at home, his infrastructure bill and Build Back Better Act include $14 billion dollars for the U.S. Forest Service to cut down public forests and develop infrastructure like biomass generation plants that will put previously stored forest CO2 into the atmosphere!

The bills in fact mandate the logging of an additional 30 million acres of public lands over the next 15 years. More than 100 scientists in ecology, forest management, biodiversity, and climate change wrote a letter opposing the bills' logging and biomass provisions! They conclude the "logging and fossil fuel subsidies and policies in the [bills] will only intensify the rate and intensity of our changing climate."

To secure such subsidies, the timber industry and its captive agencies lie about wildfire and logging's ability to reduce it, even though scientific research shows "logging in U.S. forests emits . . . more than 10 times the amount emitted by wildfires and tree mortality from insects combined."

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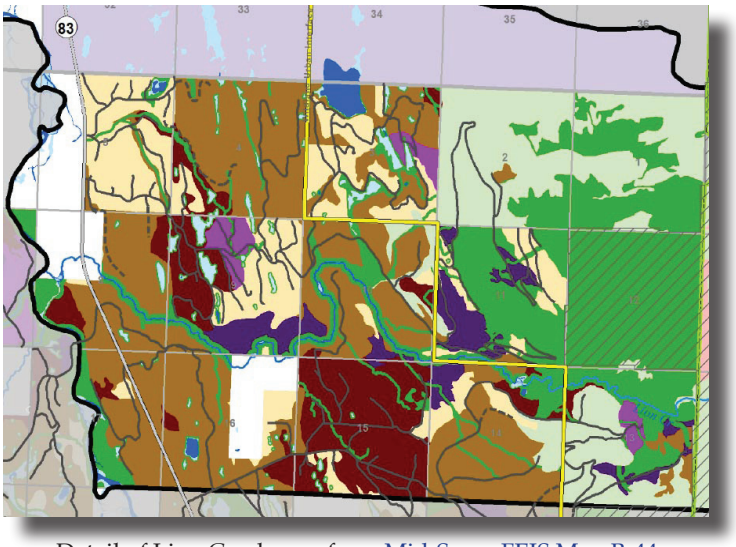
Deforestation and Clear-Cuts

The timber industry and its captive agencies are equally deceptive in their use of logging terminology. They shun the word "deforestation" even though they clear-cut log, killing all the trees in a given area and deforesting it. A broader term for this is "regeneration harvest," which still means the forest has been killed.

To obscure its clear-cut logging, the Forest Service firstly says it doesn't do so. Then it may leave a few trees per acre (which inevitably blow down) so it can call the logging "shelterwood", "seed tree" or "clear-cuts with reserves."

The National Forest Management Act, however, limits the size of all these "regeneration openings" to 40 acres because they essentially function like a clear-cut. The FS is required to disclose the oversize openings to the public. This revealed, for example, that the Flathead's Bug Creek timber sale proposed 4 oversize openings, 2 of them larger than one-half square mile each (320 acres)!



Detail of Lion Creek area from Mid-Swan FEIS Map B-44.

As you can see from the sample area map on this page, the Mid-Swan Landscape Restoration Project proposes lots of regeneration openings (dark brown) up to nearly one square mile in size and an undisclosed number of regeneration openings scattered among thinned or un-thinned forest in the medium-brown color code!

Recreation Development v. Conservation

A number of "conservation-friendly" businesses and groups have apparently decided there is more money to be made in recreation development than in the conservation of native ecosystems. There can be no clearer indication of the increasing disconnect between thrill-seeking/money-making recreation and reverence for the natural world than articles like Kristian Jackson's "Moments of Flow". He concludes the best mountain bike trails "are built as a means to their own end. Rather than a beautiful view or a waterfall, the trail itself becomes the intrinsic reward."

The Lower Yellowstone River Coalition has identified 4 public access gaps east of Billings, MT and intends to funnel "investment in outdoor infrastructure" to make the river more available "for floating, boating, fishing and camping." The goal is to make the lower Yellowstone an economic engine like the upper Yellowstone, which some would argue is being overrun by human recreation. Montana Wilderness Association, recently re-branded as Wild Montana, is a partner in the lower Yellowstone project.

What do such projects have to do with conserving wildlands and wild rivers? There is no surer way to kill the goose that laid the golden egg than to throw more people at it, especially people more interested in the infrastructure than the ecosystem.

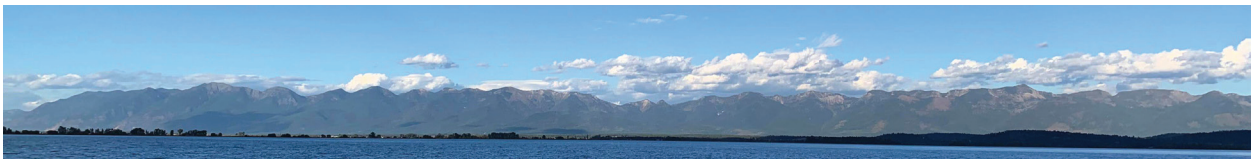
Suzanne Simard's "In Search of the Mother Tree"

Many of us feel we are in a holy place when we stand in the middle of an old growth forest. Part of a mysterious life cycle is apparent as young trees sprout from rotting fallen trees, but there is much more going on than meets the eye!

Suzanne Simard began her research into how trees communicate with each other and with other plant life while working for the Canadian Forest Service. The accepted norm, as with the U.S. Forest Service, was to clear-cut all trees and use herbicides to kill off "competing" vegetation to get new trees to grow. Simard documented the persistent failure of this approach and set about discovering how trees and other plants instead cooperate with one another for their mutual benefit.

Her book "In Search of the Mother Tree" documents her decades of painstaking research, shedding light on the magic of how forest ecosystems work. She found that threads of mycorrhizal fungi extend and interconnect the root systems of trees and other plants, allowing them to share nutrients and water!

Simard calls this a neural network through which plants communicate and change behaviors, documenting with science what indigenous people have long known. Simard shows us how a large mother tree remains connected to and nurtures her offspring, provided she is not cut down. If the Forest Services would only get the message and stop clearcutting! Never underestimate the intelligence of trees!



Annual Membership Meeting Report

The weather cooperated and Swan View Coalition held its COVID-safe annual meeting outdoors on a beautiful Fall day, October 10.

Working Committee officers were re-elected to their same positions for another year: Keith Hammer - Chair, Julie Bates - Secretary, and Carol Buchan - Treasurer.

Unsolicited Praise for Our Work and Ranger Reports!

"You're so welcome [for the donation]! We're both grateful for your continuing efforts to preserve the Swan Range and its plant and animal life."

C.J.

"Glad you guys are still doing what you do to preserve such a beautiful part of this Nation and the planet we are stewards of."

A.C.

"I am so grateful you hold the Forest Service to account!"

N.J.

"Thanks for all you and the Swan View Coalition do!"

N.S.

"Excellent research and letter!"

C.P.

"AWESOME comments. You nailed it! Thanks for bringing this to my attention."

K.G.

"Keep up the so important work."

L.S.

"I always love the pictures you faithfully send every Saturday. These are particularly spectacular!"

K.K.

"Thanks for sharing these adventures via your weekly reports - fun and visually wonderful!"

G.N.

"We so enjoy the photos, especially now that we're back in Evanston."

S.G.

"Really great pictures!!! Tell the crew to keep 'em comin'!"

K.K.

"It's always a pleasure, even if only "armchair" at times."

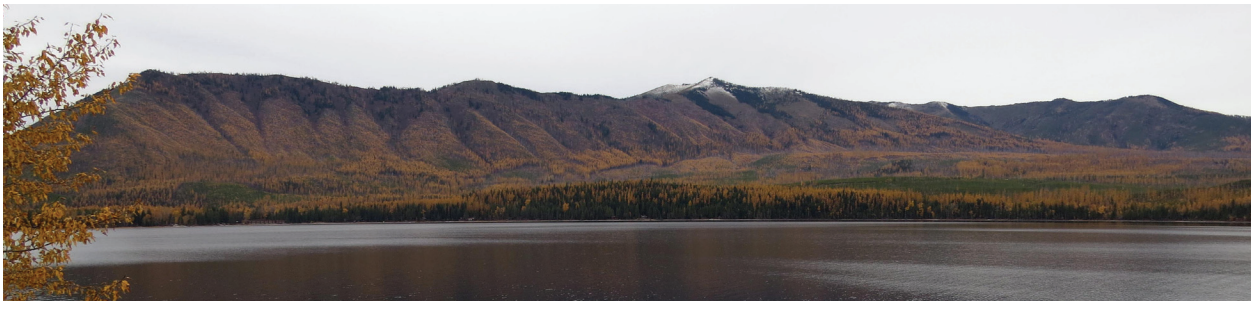
C.M.

"These photos are such a treat. Thanks to all the photographers!"

N.R.

"Thank you for providing a place where we can share and be inspired by others' observations!"

P.J.



Help Us Raise $20,000 to Meet our Year-End Budget!

We rely in large part on member donations to fund our work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. **You can help us broaden our membership by giving Gift Memberships at $25 each,** either on-line or using the form below! **It's easy to join with and help others support our work:**

1. Send a check to Swan View Coalition at 3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 - or -

2. Use your credit card securely on-line at https://swanviewcoalition.networkforgood.com (or by clicking on the Donate Now button at right)!

Network for Good handles your transaction securely for us and informs us immediately via email of your donation by credit card. You can also choose to give monthly, quarterly or yearly there to make it easier or more affordable (or change your mind anytime)! If you have other info you want to get to us, such as Gift Membership info, simply email it to keith@swanview.org or mail it to the address in #1, above.

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If there is pink on your mailing label, it means you haven't donated in nearly a year or more. Please make a donation so we can keep sending you our newsletter and continue our work!

[ ] Here's $25 to cover my minimum dues, newsletters, alerts, and Swan Ranger Reports.
[ ] Here's $50 to help restore a bit of peace and quiet to America's public lands.
[ ] Here's $100 to help keep forest roads from ending up in America's bull trout streams.
[ ] Here's $500 to help secure grizzly, lynx and wolverine habitat for future generations.
[ ] Here's $_____ to help save the world, one mountain range and one river at a time!
[ ] Here's $_____ for ____ Gift Memberships at a minimum of $25 each. I've included each recipient's name, mailing address, email address, and my greeting on separate paper.
[ ] As a gift of appreciation for my donation, please send me [ ] the Swan/Flathead history booklet "The Lineage of Chief Aeneas: A History of People and Place" and/or [ ] a Swan Ranger patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
[ ] Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

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Swan View Coalition, Inc.
3165 Foothill Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

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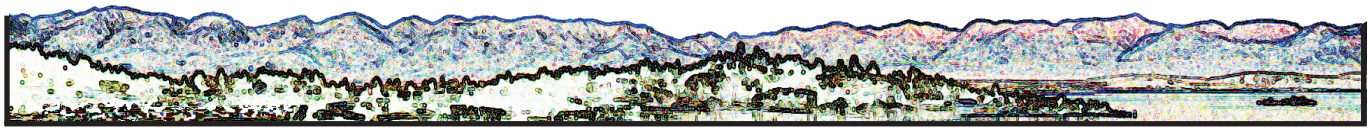
Swan View's News

Holidays 2021



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